



State Board of Education Resolution
To Make Recommendations Regarding High School Credit Flexibility
SR15-6

WHEREAS, District of Columbia law requires State Board of Education approval of high school graduation requirements;

WHEREAS, the District is one of the few jurisdictions in the United States where the time-based Carnegie unit (120 hours of class or contact time with an instructor during the year) is the sole means for awarding course credit for a traditional high school diploma;

WHEREAS, the opportunity gap remains massive in the District of Columbia, illustrated most recently by the 2015 Partnership for Readiness for College and Career (PARCC) scores, which showed performance for the most and least privileged students differed by 44 to 58 percentage points;

WHEREAS, students who enter high school either unprepared to meet the District of Columbia's rigorous academic standards or already having acquired the knowledge and skills to demonstrate mastery must enroll in courses organized into standard Carnegie units without an option to pace their own learning;

WHEREAS, the District of Columbia is the only jurisdiction in the country that requires students to enroll in Algebra I by ninth grade, regardless of their readiness;

WHEREAS, high schools in the District of Columbia may not tailor their credit-bearing course offerings outside of the Carnegie unit to take advantage of logical synergies between academic material that would enhance student learning;

WHEREAS, research indicates that academic outcomes improve when high school students are able to pace their own learning, choose how they acquire skills and knowledge, and determine how they provide evidence of proficiencies;

WHEREAS, key features of competency-based education include student self-pacing and choice in skill and knowledge acquisition and demonstration of learning;

WHEREAS, successful implementation of competency-based courses requires significant thought, preparation, and teacher support;

WHEREAS, most high schools in the District of Columbia currently organize their class schedules around the Carnegie unit, and its elimination all at once could create unproductive disruption to student learning;

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education convened a cross-city task force of 25 members representing teachers, principals, traditional and charter public schools, community groups, the business community, the Washington Teacher's Union, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for

Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, and the Council of the District of Columbia from August 2015 to December 2015 to set forth recommendations for high-school credit flexibility;

WHEREAS, the majority of task force members agreed that creating alternative pathways to earning credit beyond the Carnegie unit represented an important first step toward recognizing that not all students learn at the same pace nor best demonstrate understanding of content based on 120 hours in a traditional classroom setting;

WHEREAS, the task force's report makes the following recommendations for earning high school credit:

1. **Create a waiver process** for schools wishing to pursue competency-based learning;
2. Allow students to receive **credit for demonstrated prior knowledge** in world languages and mathematics;
3. **Maintain Carnegie units** as the default means for earning credit where neither of the two above conditions apply;
4. Consistent with the benefits of student self-paced learning associated with competency-based models, **remove the requirement that students enroll in Algebra I by 9th grade.**

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education has reviewed these recommendations and conducted an independent literature review;

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education urges the State Superintendent to provide diligent oversight of the progress and achievement of students involved in waiver-based credit programs, with an eye towards identifying strengths, weaknesses, best practices, and ways to improve outcomes;

WHEREAS, the State Board of Education finds that the recommendations may assist students at all levels of academic performance by eliminating barriers to meeting individual educational needs and by promoting competency-based learning that ensures students advance with the requisite knowledge to be successful;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT, on December 16, 2015, the State Board advises the State Superintendent to consider the High School Credit Flexibility Task Force's recommendations and discussion as outlined in its report, and to initiate rulemaking to implement the recommendations endorsed in this resolution.

Date Adopted: December 16, 2015 Signed: _____